

Sūrah 110

Al-Naşr (Help)

(Madīnan Period)

Title

The word *al-naşr* (victory) in the opening verse also provides the *Sūrah*'s title.

Period of Revelation

According to 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Abbās, this is the final *Sūrah* of the Qur'ān. In other words, no complete *Sūrah* after this was sent down to the Prophet (peace be upon him),¹ (Muslim, Nasā'ī, Ṭabarānī, Ibn

1. Several reports indicate that some verses were revealed after this *Sūrah*. It is nonetheless hard to identify the last verse sent down to the Prophet (peace be upon him). Barā' ibn 'Āzib specifies Verse 176 of *al-Nisā'* on this count, (Bukhārī). Ibn 'Abbās is of the opinion that the last verse is the one that forbids usury. This view is reinforced by reports on 'Umar's authority cited by Aḥmad, Ibn Mājah and Ibn Marduwayh. However, these reports do not pointedly mention any verse in this respect. There is only a vague statement that the verse forbidding usury is one of those that were revealed in the end. In his *Faḍā'il al-Qur'ān*, Abū 'Ubayd and in his *Tafsīr*, Ibn Jarīr have stated on the authority of Zuhri and Sa'id ibn al-Musayyib respectively that Verses 275 and 282 of *al-Baqarah* are the last ones to be revealed. However, Ibn 'Abbās's other version, as related by Nasā'ī,

Abī Shaybah and Ibn Marduwayh). 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Umar informs that it was revealed at Minā during the Farewell Pilgrimage.

After its revelation, the Prophet (peace be upon him) delivered his sermon while sitting on his she-camel, (Tirmidhī, Bazzār, Bayhaqī, Ibn Abī Shaybah, 'Abd ibn Ḥumayd, Abū Ya'lā and Ibn Marduwayh). In his *Kitāb al-Ḥajj*, Bayhaqī has recorded, on the authority of Sarrā' bint Nabhān, the Prophet's sermon. She informs: "I heard the Prophet (peace be upon him) saying during the Farewell Pilgrimage: 'O people, do you know which day it is?' They replied that Allah and His Messenger know best. He told them that it was the 9th of Dhū al-Ḥijjah. He then asked them about the place, to which they made the same reply. He told them that it was *mash'ar al-ḥarām*. He then said: 'I do not know whether I will be able to meet you after this. Beware! Your blood and your honour are as sacred for each of you as this day and this place are. You should follow this until you appear before your Lord and He take you to account. Listen! Let this message be conveyed by those present here to those who are away. Listen! Did I convey it to you?' Not many days elapsed after our return to Madīnah than the Prophet (peace be upon him) passed away."

Ibn 'Abbās says that after the revelation of this *Sūrah* the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "I have been informed of my death. It is now time for my death," (Aḥmad, Ibn Jarīr, Ibn al-Mundhir and Ibn Marduwayh). Other reports by him indicate that the Prophet (peace be upon him) had surmised his death from this *Sūrah*. (Aḥmad, Ibn Jarīr, Ṭabarānī, Nasā'ī, Ibn Abī Ḥātim and Ibn Marduwayh.)

The Prophet's wife, Umm Ḥabībah reports: "When this *Sūrah* was revealed, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said that he would die the same year. Upon hearing this, Fāṭimah cried. He then told her: 'You will be the first of my family to join me.' Upon this she smiled," (Ibn Abī Ḥātim and Ibn Marduwayh). Bayhaqī has recorded another report of identical import on Ibn 'Abbās's authority.

Ibn Marduwayh and Ibn Jarīr is that Verse 281 of *al-Baqarah* is the last verse. In his *Tafsīr*, al-Firyābī quotes Ibn 'Abbās to the effect that this verse was revealed 81 days before the Prophet's demise. However, Sa'īd ibn Jubayr, as narrated by Ibn Abī Ḥātim, states that it came down only 9 days before his demise. Ubayy ibn Ka'b, however, maintains that Verses 128 and 129 of *al-Tawbah* were the last to be sent down, (Aḥmad and Ḥākim).

Ibn 'Abbās relates: "Umar used to summon me to his sessions with such senior Companions who had participated in the Battle of Badr. My presence there was resented by some of them, who asked why I, in preference to their sons, was invited in particular to the sessions with them." (Bukhārī and Ibn Jarīr inform us that 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn al-'Awf had raised this objection.) He then again invited me and those senior Companions. I realized that he wanted to demonstrate to them the rationale for my presence in their meetings. During the conversation, 'Umar asked them to comment on *Sūrah al-Naṣr*. Some said that it commands them to praise Allah and to seek His forgiveness when His help comes to them and victory is granted to them. Some said that it alludes to the conquests of towns and forts. Some did not comment at all. 'Umar then turned to me, asking me whether I endorsed their observations. I said: "No, this *Sūrah* informs us about the Prophet's demise. For it tells that when Allah's help has come and victory has been granted to him, he should take it as a signal of his death. He should, therefore, praise Allah and seek His forgiveness." Upon this 'Umar said: "I do not know anything beyond what you have said." Another variant report contains this addition: "Umar told those elders as to how they could reproach him for inviting a young person, as they had themselves noted why 'Umar used to invite him" (Bukhārī, Aḥmad, Tirmidhī, Ibn Jarīr, Ibn Marduwayh, Baghawī, Bayhaqī, *Kitāb al-Ḥajj*, and Ibn al-Mundhir.)

Subject Matter and Themes

As is evident from these reports, Allah tells the Prophet (peace be upon him) in this *Sūrah* that as Islam conquers Arabia and people throng to the fold of Islam, so this marks the completion of his mission. He was, therefore, directed to engage in glorifying Allah and seeking His forgiveness for any lapse in carrying out this mission. On a little reflection, one recognizes the tremendous difference between a Messenger and a political leader. The latter celebrates his victory and boasts of his leadership qualities on accomplishing his mission. Here, though, is the role model of the Messenger of Allah. In a brief span of only 23 years, he transformed the whole outlook of his people on articles of faith, conduct,

morality, culture and civilization, social norms, economics, politics and war and peace. He steered his people steeped in the morass of *Jāhiliyyah* and led them on to conquer the world. His community became the world leader. However, even after achieving so much there is no reference to celebration or any sense of victory. Rather, he is asked to praise and glorify Allah and to seek His forgiveness, a command which he obeys in all humility.

‘Ā’ishah informs that “before his demise the Prophet (peace be upon him) used to chant certain formulae. I asked him about those that he had recently started to recite. He replied: ‘A signal has been given to me. That is *Sūrah al-Naṣr*. Whenever I note it, I should recite these formulae,’” (Aḥmad, Muslim, Ibn Jarīr, Ibn al-Mundhir and Ibn Marduwayh). Some variant reports on ‘Ā’ishah’s authority state that the Prophet (peace be upon him) used to recite these supplications profusely during the postures of bowing and prostration in Prayer. “Glory be to You and praise be to You. O Lord, forgive me.” This was how he interpreted *Sūrah al-Naṣr*,” (Bukhārī, Muslim, Abū Dāwūd, Nasā’ī, Ibn Mājah and Ibn Jarīr). Umm Salamah informs that “during his last days the Prophet (peace be upon him) used to recite almost all the time – sitting, standing and walking: ‘Glory and praise be to Him.’ One day I asked him why he recited it so frequently. He replied: ‘I have been commanded to do so.’ Then he recited *Sūrah al-Naṣr*,” (Ibn Jarīr). ‘Abd Allāh ibn Mas’ūd reports: “After the revelation of this *Sūrah*, the Prophet (peace be upon him) frequently chanted: ‘O Lord! Glory be to You and praise be to You. O Lord! Forgive me. Glory be to You, our Lord, and praise be to You. O Lord, forgive me. You are the Oft-Returning, Most Forgiving,’” (Ibn Jarīr, Aḥmad and Ibn Abī Ḥātim). Ibn ‘Abbās informs that after the revelation of this *Sūrah* the Prophet (peace be upon him) paid greater attention to his preparation for the Hereafter, (Nasā’ī, Ṭabarānī, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, and Ibn Marduwayh).